phanganearthworks k-dome – USER MANUAL

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY, we believe you find most answers to your questions below…

Anybody interested in going into the dome and wanting to learn more about darkroom retreats, please see www.phanganearthworks.com/darkroom.html to access resources that will prove useful in your preparation.

NUTRITION

Basically, anything goes. There are no forbiddances, but some items clearly "feel" better than others. Having said that, everybody is different and while some foods work well for some they won't for others. It is clear that you don't go into the dome to indulge and eat rich and heavy food. Many people find that the need for physical food is greatly diminished in this non-ordinary environment, to the point of not taking physical food at all and just drinking water. But the choice is yours. Keeping it simple is probably a good idea.

One extra mention about fasting: We recommend you do NOT fast during your darkroom retreat. Being in complete darkness generates a strong non-physical experience, and many people will benefit from a little bit of grounding in the form of (small amounts of) food. Fasting might well make you more "volatile" and thereby increase the risks of an unpleasant turn of events.

Mantak Chia, who authored some worthwhile books on what he calls darkness technology, also touches the subject of darkroom nutrition. He suggests focusing on foods that are rich in tryptophan, one of 20 amino acids. Among his favourites are brown rice, bananas, dates, figs, seaweed, milk and milk products, almonds and some others. For a more complete list and to access this book (and other more) in PDF format, please refer to:

www.phanganearthworks.com/darkroom.html.

Here are a couple of pointers:

1. It is best if you "pair up" as "dome buddies" with a colleague of yours. That entails that person A looks after person B while B is in retreat, and B later returns the favour by looking after A during his/her retreat. This mainly relates to PLAN B (see point 5 below), which is about getting food to the person in the dome.
2. Bring sufficient water, 5 litres per day will be plenty for most.
3. Decide on your food items, preferably a couple of days prior to retreat begin. If you wait till the last moment you run the risk of driving into town and finding yourself in front of an empty shelf at Limpipong, because once again they're out of almonds.
4. **PLAN A:** If you go in for 1-3 days, you can pretty much take in all you're going to need. Make your own mix of nuts, seeds, dried fruits. Take in 30 bananas (not too ripe, there is no fridge inside and you don't want them to rot) and a litre of milk for day 1 and you're pretty much sorted. Packed soy milk doesn't go off… bring a sufficiently big container with a lid that closes well, to keep your food waste in a sealed environment. That will diminish unwanted odours inside the dome.
5. **PLAN B:** Or decide you want to stick to brown rice only, in which case you dome buddy (see point 1 above) will take care of boiling the rice for you and deliver it at the agreed times. In case you do not have a dome buddy, we can take care of the rice boiling for you. However, you must bring us your rice with clear instructions of how much you want us to prepare for each meal. We are not going to go shopping for you, so think ahead and plan carefully. Also bring 2 bowls or better 2 Tupperware containers with a lid that closes well and 2 spoons. You must tell us how many meals and at what times of the day. Typically, Plan B people will opt for 1 meal at midday only, or, if they chose to have 2 meals, at noon and in the evening. 3 meals are not recommended – remember you want to maximize your practice time rather than spending half the time digesting food.

   What follows is an outline of the procedure of how your warm bowl of rice gets to you:

   a. At the agreed time of the day, your dome buddy/we will knock at the outer door (we are talking about a double door system, which allows us to put food between 2 doors). When you hear the knocking, get ready to cover yourself under a blanket (fold it over a couple of times to make sure no light will get to you), use a

blindfold (provided by us, inside the dome) on top if you like, and close you eyes. The point of this is to avoid the slightest beam of light to reach you and your eyes. Once you have done so, and are ready, either say OKAY (or alike), or knock back in case you wish to remain in silence.

b. The outer door will now be opened, and the food be placed between the 2 doors. At this stage, some light will penetrate the dome, that's why you had to prepare to receive the food, that's why we wait for your OKAY (or alike)/knocking back.

c. The outer door will be closed again, and your dome buddy/we leave.

d. Now open the inner door, and get your bowl of food. You must still be "covered" up, as there always is some light unless both doors are closed simultaneously. So get your food in, close the inner door well and then "uncover" yourself. If you follow this procedure, no light will hit you at all.

e. Eat your food and put the bowl back between the doors. The same things apply, remember to "cover" up again.

f. The empty bowl will only be collected next time food is being delivered (in order to minimize disturbing your retreat). That is why you need 2 bowls/food containers and 2 spoons.

g. We recommend being in silence as much as possible, but if there is anything urgent you can of course communicate with your dome buddy/us in times of meal delivery. However, please note that in case we are catering the rice to you, on most occasions this task will be performed by our Burmese friend San, who isn't a native speaker…

TOILET

No, we didn't forget to build in a toilet. It's there, under a wooden trap door, ready to be used. When nature calls, you open the trap and do your business, clean up and close again. It's crucial to be mindful as you go about your business, a lack of focus might result in inundating your yoga mat and personal belongings.

1. Locate the toilet
2. Open the trap
3. Find the spot to place your feet
4. Assume kagasana, the crow pose (we're talking about an Indian toilet on which you crouch down…)
5. Execute
6. To your right, there is a bum gun. The pressure is low so don't worry about collateral damage. If you need toilet paper, please bring your own along. We do NOT provide toilet paper.
7. To your left, there is a tap under which there is big bucket with a small bucket inside. Use this to flush. We recommend staying in kagasana on the toilet so that you can aim well. If you're not careful in the flushing stage of the procedure you risk spilling water onto the floor.
8. Get up and close the trap behind you. Well done.
9. Shit happens, sometimes. You might spill water onto the floor. In such a case, do not panic. Use your extra towel to wipe up the water. Put it out between the 2 doors, so we can collect it next time we bring you food. We will dry it for you and hand it back in. If you are on PLAN A, food-wise, just leave it between the 2 doors, it won't go anywhere until you come out.

One mention about the use of toilet paper and it's brilliant alternative – the bum gun. As is customary in this part of the world, we warmly suggest you will wash yourself with water only, using the built-in bum gun. Resorting to toilet paper is sub-optimal, especially in a closed environment such as the dome. However, if you really have to, then here is how to do it. First of all, bring it along, as we don't provide any. Never flush used paper down the toilet – it will clog the pipe and result in mess inside the dome! We will provide a bin with a lid though, in which you can place your used paper. Put it out between the 2 doors with your empty food bowl so we can empty and burn its contents.

We will put it back in between the doors soonest possible. Opting to use toilet paper also entails more disturbance from the outside, as we will have to knock an extra time to get the emptied bin back into the dome.

ENDING YOUR RETREAT

At the pre-agreed time and date, we will knock on the outer door, announcing that your time in the dome is now up. Please respond in a clearly audible manner so we know you heard and understood. Take your time. We will not open the outer door, you will come out at your own pace (although within a reasonable time frame, please get out within 20 to 45 minutes max. after we knocked. Remember that we need the time between 2 retreats to clean up, vent, and purify the space). So you open the inner door, and get used to the dim light coming in. Then open the outer door but refrain from looking outside (don't look at the waxed floor either, it reflects the light). Once you are used to that, gradually come out. Use your sunglasses to protect your eyes.

IMPORTANT: Take it easy, you just spent a number of days in complete darkness. Your system needs time to re-adjust. We recommend not riding home on your own, better ask a friend to come pick you up. It's possible you experience some headache as a result of the re-adjustment to the intensity of the light. Do not worry, it is temporary.

WHAT WE PROVIDE

- ❑ The dome with a solar-powered ventilation system and running water for the uses described above. Please note that power is limited so please refrain from running the ventilation system on an ongoing basis. We will monitor the battery charge fro the outside, and in case of over-use disconnect the power. We have done many test runs till date and know that it is not necessary to run the fans around the clock. We ask you to keep that in mind and be considerate.
- ❑ A rollable mattress to sleep on
- ❑ 1 small towel to wipe the floor
- ❑ 1 small floor mat, to be placed in front of the toilet (purpose: so you can dry your feet before you step onto your yoga mat)
- ❑ Rice cooking and delivery at agreed times of the day, if desired at all (see above, you can also go with PLAN A and not bother with having warm meals for those couple of days)

WHAT TO BRING – CHECKLIST

- ❑ 3 (small) towels, one to dry yourself, one to place on the floor in front of the toilet (helps you find the toilet in the dark), and a spare one should you spill water and have to wipe the floor
- ❑ Water (see above)
- ❑ Food (see above)
- ❑ 2 bowls or better 2 Tupperware containers with lid, and 2 spoons
- ❑ Although it tends to warm and cosy inside, it's smart to prepare for chilly moments as well. Therefore bring a blanket, sarongs, jumpers…
- ❑ Yoga mat, cushions for meditation, or even a chair if you are used to meditate in a sitting position
- ❑ Toilet paper, if you have to use some
- ❑ Ear plugs, to aid the overall sensory deprivation experience
- ❑ If you want to use a timer, make sure it emits NO light WHATSOEVER. The same applies for mp3 players. Even the faintest leakages of light, such as watch dial or LED will disturb you in the darkness.
- ❑ Sunglasses, to be worn as you emerge from the dome.

We wish you a wonderful, profound, and transformative learning experience in our dome!